

as absolutely necessary for every architectural student.

An author whose work has just now reached a second edition and is before us,—“Ancient and Modern Art, Historical and Critical,” by George Cleghorn,*—says, “If the practice of our modern British architecture is corrupt, vacillating, and unsatisfactory, the theories and doctrines inculcated in a great portion of the leading journals and treatises, published within the last twenty-five years, are characterised by the same bad taste, affectation, and inconsistency.” We must take care, therefore, how we praise. The same polite writer says,—

“A great proportion of our British architecture, within the last half century, consists of imitations of the Gothic, both ecclesiastical and castellated. They are generally in the worst taste—meagre, false, and affected—adhering to no style or period—having no statuary, and destitute of the characteristic features and accessories of the ancient structures. The modern Gothic church is comparatively high, square, and stunted in length. A greater length, with a projecting chancel and semi-octagonal abais, would not only be more graceful, but supply a convenient recess for the altar.”

He has evidently been out of the world for a time. And elsewhere he says,—

“While our English architects and architectural writers have for more than a quarter of a century been indulging in abstract and barren speculations on the perfection and superiority of Grecian architecture, which they never dream of reducing to practice, except in detached portions and on a pitiful scale; vituperating the Roman and Italian, which they do not scruple to borrow, only to disfigure and corrupt; eulogising the Egyptian, and recommending its modern adaptation in brick and stucco for the most plebeian and degrading purposes; indulging in every kind of dogmatism and paradox in their mystified discussions and absurd controversies;—the great continental nations have been quietly and steadily improving their taste, and raising magnificent and lasting monuments of architecture, decorated with sculpture and painting, well calculated to perpetuate their fame and achievements to a distant posterity.”

Such an intolerant and captious spirit as is displayed in this book should be accompanied by greater knowledge than is displayed in the intimation that the new Houses of Parliament are in the Elizabethan style (p. 172), or in his attempt to maintain that the Pointed style originated from the imitation of groves of trees, in which the northern nations worshipped, and wickerwork constructions. Other theories are not to be listened to,—“the sylvan hypothesis affords the only rational solution” (“motley’s your only wear”). It seems quite surprising that any man who has studied the subject should, in these days, be found to take up this long-ago exploded fancy, and gravely write:—

“To deny that the purest ecclesiastical Gothic exhibits the most striking similitude to the interlacing of groves and trees, as well as to the construction of wickerwork, were as unreasonable as to shut our eyes to the marked analogy between the Grecian Doric temple and the wooden hut. Indeed, the whole composition and details of a Gothic cathedral—the nave, aisles, clustered pillars, groining, and ramifications, cross springers of the vaults and roof, the transoms, mullions, tracery, and minute ornaments—all point to the same prototype. What is a great part of its sculpture and decorations, its trefoils, quatrefoils, cinquefoils, its finials, crockets, featherings, cusps, foliage, and fretwork, but an imitation, more or less free, of plants, flowers, fruits, and vegetable nature? What are its stained glass windows and oriels, but an imitation of the harmonious and chastened gleams of sunshine

passing through the branches and openings of the richly variegated foliage.”

Contradiction is not necessary; and then to find this same gentleman turning up his nose and not merely pooh-poohing every body and every thing connected with architecture in England, but throwing all sorts of abuse at them, is really too good.

Enough of him for the present, and let us look at a quiet little work by Henry Shaw, F.S.A., entitled “A Booke of Sundry Draughtes, principally serving for Glasiers; and not impertinent for Plasterers and Gardeners, besides sundry other Professions,”* and which professes to be almost wholly copied from a work originally “Printed in Shoolane, at the Sign of the Falcon, by Walter Dight, in 1615.” It consists of a large number of forms for glazing (certainly “not impertinent for plasterers,” but suggestive), and will be found very useful. We had arranged a collection of such forms, intending to engrave them for our pages, affording proof that we thought some such publication as this was needed. We agree with Master Gidde, the author of the original work, when he says,—

“Although it may seem to those expert in glazing that these draughts are needless, being so plane and in use, not deserving in this sort to be published, yet notwithstanding here I doe in friendly courtesie admonish that it is most needful, giving choice to the builder both for price and draught of work, which by no understanding can the glazier so sensibly demonstrate his feat as by having his examples of draught, for by such show the builder shall understand what to make choice of, for whose care and furtherance only I have published this notice of glazing, knowing the expert master is not unfurnished of these usual draughts, though each workman have not all of them.”

And here we will end for a time.

ON ARCHITECTURAL EXHIBITIONS.

THREE weeks have elapsed since a critical sketch of the contents of the Architectural room at the Royal Academy was laid before the readers of THE BUILDER, coupled with a sincere expression of regret at the inefficiency of the collection with reference to the purposes for which it is offered to public notice; an inefficiency which evidently resulted from the just and frequently-urged claims of the profession to attention being unheeded by the Academy.

During this interval many letters have been received on the subject, the writers of which seem deeply to regret their apparently helpless position, and, knowing that they express the general sentiment of the majority of the profession, it seems desirable seriously and dispassionately to consider the subject—to settle its real importance—to point out the sources of the evils at present connected with it, and, if possible, to suggest a remedy.

The subject will be fully discussed if the following queries can be satisfactorily answered. Of what importance to the public and to the professors of the art is an improvement in architectural taste? To what extent is an exhibition of designs for buildings calculated to conduce to such improvement? What is the present position of our national exhibition of architectural designs, and what the cause and consequences of that position? To whom should the public and the profession look for a remedy, and what should that remedy be?

First, then, of what importance to the public and to the professors of art is an improvement in architectural taste? If we consider man in his social character, influenced to the extent he undoubtedly is by the force of example and habit (that is, by what he continually sees, animate or inanimate, or by what is continually acting upon some other of his senses) and if we allow that the contemplation of visible beauty with an understanding eye, is elevating, improving, and delightful—that visible beauty may be embodied

in buildings—and that designing and appreciating such beauty is architectural taste, it must follow that an improvement in that taste is of considerable importance. The social character of man induces him to live in the immediate vicinity of his species, and consequently buildings are erected, cathedrals, churches, palaces, theatres, mansions, monuments, bridges, streets, shops, houses, cottages—all are the results of the gratification of this desire in mankind to herd together. We live in buildings, we walk out, we see buildings, we transact our business in buildings, we worship in buildings, we amuse ourselves in buildings. Look where we will, at home or abroad, in whatever direction we turn, some development of some idea in building, is almost sure to meet our eyes; the visible beauty or the visible ugliness of building, is operating on us all every day, indeed, almost every hour of our lives: what then may not fairly be expected from an improvement in architectural taste. Let us trace its workings.

A love for the beautiful becoming general, the means for gratifying it become general, that is, the demand being created, invention is taxed. Ugliness is known in its true character of ignorance. Beauty is recognised as wisdom: education thus becomes worth acquiring, and is acquired. Science offers the right hand of friendship to labour, and relieves her of half the burden; material becomes a universal language for the expression of thought; competition and the desire for progress successfully combat with sameness and apathy; the professor rises in the public estimation (a consequence only to be ensured by his satisfying a generally felt public want); the minor arts flourish;—it being a fact, however little recognised, that the success of the mason, modeller, carver, gilder, decorator, paper-hanger, and of numerous other trades and occupations, is always in exact ratio to the development of architectural taste in the public mind; and withal, though the time expended in execution gradually diminishes, the number of labourers is ever on the increase, since a gratified love for beauty, gaining vigour by the food afforded it, continually enlists new worshippers at its shrine. It is only from a contemplation of these truths in their various bearings, that we can arrive at any proper sense of the importance of a general improvement in architectural taste.

We have next to consider to what extent an exhibition of designs for buildings is calculated to conduce to such an improvement.

It will hardly be denied that improvements in, and additions to, the appliances and delights of men, result not so much from a demand being, in the first instance, actually made for the supply of recognised wants, but from its being an honourable and profitable exercise for the ingenuity and energies of individuals, first, to discover these wants, then to invent the means of gratifying them, and, subsequently, to take judicious steps for proving to the public that such wants really exist, and are worthy of attention; and we think it may be shewn that an exhibition of designs is one of the most natural and influential steps that can be taken by the professors of an art, in their endeavours thus to act upon the public mind. In the first place, it courts attention, and tacitly acknowledges the importance of public opinion, while it boldly asserts its own claims to notice. If a true exposition, it gives a good idea of the extent to which the positive appreciation of the art has arrived at that time; and, reacting by the force of example, leaves a latent desire in its beholders to do as they there see others have done and are doing. It at once induces in the architecturally uneducated who view it, a frame of mind and train of thought, with regard to its subjects, more certain to be attended with a satisfactory result than any that is likely to be engendered by the mere existence of the individuals in the vicinity of even the most splendid practical examples, because, in the latter position, a dull feeling of incapability and difficulty prevents them from exerting the power of reflective contemplation naturally possessed by almost all: whereas, in the former, a momentum sufficient to overcome the inertia is given, by the supply of a convenient and easy means for gratifying that spirit of criticism and comparison of merit that would continue to lie dormant, without some

* Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London.

* London, William Pickering, 1849.